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ABSTRACT

In recent years, a number of experiments have been undertaken in Hungary with alternative approaches to secondary school education for Roma children. This report examines six different institutions that have attempted to help Roma children make the transition from basic to secondary school, and to improve their performance and future opportunities in education and in the labor market. Characteristics of the schools and their approaches can be incorporated into mainstream public schools and/or schools which focus on education for Roma students and other disadvantaged groups. Many of the ingredients of success identified in the study, including involving parents, supporting students outside of the classroom, and incorporating multicultural approaches to education have the potential to improve the quality and inclusiveness of education systems as a whole, to the benefit of the entire population. The report is divided into five chapters: (1) "Introduction and Background"; (2) "Institutional Background"; (3) "Student Profiles"; (4) "School Performance"; and (5) "Conclusions." (Contains 9 tables, 1 figure, and 17 references.) (Author/BT)

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ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS AND ROMA EDUCATION:

A REVIEW OF ALTERNATIVE SECONDARY SCHOOL MODELS FOR THE EDUCATION OF ROMA CHILDREN IN HUNGARY

23027
September 2001

SO 034 706

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ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS AND ROMA EDUCATION:

A REVIEW OF ALTERNATIVE SECONDARY SCHOOL MODELS FOR THE EDUCATION OF ROMA CHILDREN IN HUNGARY

The International Bank of Reconstruction
and Development / THE WORLD BANK Regional Office Hungary,
Budapest

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Abstract

In recent years, a number of experiments have been undertaken in Hungary with alternative approaches to secondary school education for Roma children. This report examines six different institutions which have aimed at helping Roma children make the transition from basic to secondary school, and improving their performance and future opportunities in education and on the labor market. Characteristics of the schools and their approaches can be incorporated into mainstream public schools and/or schools which focus on education for Roma students and other disadvantaged groups. Many of the ingredients of success identified in the study, including involving parents, supporting students outside of the classroom and incorporating multicultural approaches to education have the potential to improve the quality and inclusiveness of education systems as a whole, to the benefit of the entire population.

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Chapter I: Introduction and Background

I. Purpose of the Study

In recent years, a number of experiments have been undertaken in Hungary with alternative approaches to secondary school education for Roma children. This report examines six different institutions which have aimed at helping Roma children make the transition from basic to secondary school, and improving their performance and future opportunities in education and on the labor market. The study was conducted by a team of Hungarian researchers in co-operation with the World Bank and the Soros Foundation. The primary purpose of the study was to document and examine the experiences of these six secondary schools in Hungary in improving the academic achievement of Roma secondary school students and increasing job and university placement.

Reviewing the achievements of the different types of schools and assessing their progress in supporting school retention and expanding opportunities for Roma students is extremely important for the further development of Roma education. While it may not be feasible, nor necessarily desirable, that all Roma be educated in separate schools, successful elements of the approaches taken in these schools can be incorporated into education policies at large. In this regard, this report is intended to inform further development of education policy in Hungary, as well as that of other countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

The focus on secondary schools in this study does not imply that there are not significant challenges at other levels of education. In fact, the next section illustrates the contrary. Roma children face barriers to successful participation in pre-primary and primary education as well. However, this study aimed to focus on the unique experience of alternative schools which have been established at the secondary level in Hungary. These schools are already serving as role models for schools in neighboring countries, and as a result it has become increasingly important to examine their experience.

The experiments have been undertaken in Hungary for two reasons. First, in general there has been more public and NGO activity in the area of Roma issues in Hungary than in other countries in the region. A recent World Bank review of Roma-related initiatives in Hungary identified nearly 1,400 projects and subprojects implemented by government agencies and NGOs in the areas of education, health, housing, and employment between 1990 and 1999. Second, recent legislation related to the financing of private schools has favored the emergence of these institutions in Hungary.

Structure of the Report

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the educational challenges affecting Roma. It describes the rationale for selecting the institutions included in this report, and for analyzing and evaluating their work. Chapter 2 addresses specific topics from the point of view of the institutions and the students and families enrolled in these schools. The chapter also includes a profile of the institutions, including enrolment figures, educational curriculum, infrastructure, and their financial status, including support from the state budget and income generated by the schools themselves. Chapter 3 analyses the socioeconomic characteristics of the students, as well as an overview of the students' family backgrounds (family size, level of family cohesion, social and financial situation of the families). Finally, Chapter 4 summarizes the characteristics of the

schools in the survey and the available evidence on performance. The conclusions in Chapter 5 indicate major tasks for the development of Roma education in the future.

II. Methodology

This study describes and assesses six Hungarian secondary schools designed to address the unique needs of Roma students. These schools include (i) the Don Bosco Primary and Vocational School; (ii) the Collegium Martineum; (iii) the Roma Chance Alternative Vocational Foundational School; (iv) the Gandhi Public Foundation Secondary Grammar School and Student's Hostel; (v) the Kalyi Jag Roma Minority Professional School, and (vi) the Józsefvárosi School. These institutions all differ in size and function. Four of the six schools provide secondary school training, including university preparatory programs, such as the Gandhi School, or a combination of vocational and grammar education, such as the Roma Chance school. One institution included in this study, the Collegium Martineum, is a student hostel (residence) which provides special educational assistance to talented secondary school students. The Józsefváros School provides additional occupational training to Roma children attending secondary school, or the upper classes of primary school.

A number of different methods were utilized in this study. Over 65 in-depth interviews were conducted with school administrators and teachers, educators, vocational trainers, parents and students. A number of documents and studies were also consulted, including the founding charters of the schools, the pedagogical missions and curriculum, articles and interviews regarding the operation of the schools, their teachers and students. Site visits were made to a number of Roma settlements, both in order to conduct interviews and to understand the living environment of Roma students.

The study presented a number of methodological challenges. For one, comparison across institutions was difficult due to the fact that the schools differ in functions and goals. Longitudinal analysis was also a challenge, as many of these schools had only been in existence for three or four years by the time the study was conducted. Finally, the collection of data on Roma student achievement and enrollment figures was made more difficult due to Hungarian national laws on the rights of national and ethnic minorities and a law on the protection of personal data and public transparency which have prohibited the collection of data by ethnicity since 1993. As a result, this study was not able to provide a rigorous empirical analysis of the outcomes and performance of these schools. Instead, the report reviews the experience gained from a qualitative perspective, and aims to identify issues which can be further explored in depth.

III. Educational Status of Roma in Hungary

The Roma minority are among the groups that have been most adversely affected by the social and economic consequences of Hungary's transition to a market economy. Roma in Hungary face three main, and interrelated, challenges: (i) socio-economic disadvantages, including high poverty and unemployment rates; (ii) poor access to social services, including health care and education, and (iii) problems related to their minority status and the poor relationship between the Roma minority and mainstream Hungarian society.

Although enrollments of Roma children in primary education, have improved greatly in recent decades, the gap between the share of Roma and non-Roma continuing on to secondary education has widened as a result of different complex factors, including their poor socio-

economic position, geographic segregation of Roma housing settlements, aspects of Roma social organization and values, and biased attitudes of non-Roma teachers and fellow students (Ringold, 2000). Different alternative school models have been established with the aim of addressing these problems and their experiences may serve as a basis for shaping educational policies in the future.

The educational status of Roma in Hungary shares much in common with the status of Roma in other countries in the region. The Hungarian socialist regime used similar educational strategies in order to assimilate Roma into mainstream society. Educational statistics illustrate rapid change in the education status of Roma during the socialist period. Two representative and comparable surveys which were conducted in 1971 and 1993 illustrate these trends. In 1971, about 26 percent of Roma aged 20 –29 had finished eight years of primary school. By 1993, this percentage had increased to over 77 percent (Kemény, Havas, Kertesi, 1994). Despite these achievements, educational attainment of Roma significantly lags behind the non-Roma population (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Educational Attainment in Hungary, 1993

	Roma (% of population)	Non-Roma (% of population)
Grade 0	9	0
Grades 1-7	33	11
Grade 8	46	36
Vocational School	11	19
General Secondary	2	24
Tertiary	0	9

Source: Kemeny, et al. in Puporka and Zadori (1999).

As was the case in other countries, assimilationist policies implemented during the socialist era often led to a disproportionate percentage of Roma students being channeled into special classes and schools. For instance, a campaign adopted in the 1960s focused on creating "special classes ... within the national school system for retarded or difficult children," classes in which a high proportion of Roma children were placed (Crowe, 1996).

The educational gap between Roma and non-Roma has been widening in Hungary, particularly in secondary grades and in rural areas. Although pre-school is compulsory for all children at age 5, for instance, 11 percent of Roma in Hungary did not attend pre-school in 1997 (Rado, 1997). The fact that over 11 percent of Roma children above the age of five do not attend nursery schools or preparatory courses presents a serious obstacle to their success in early grades (Rigó, 1995). Educational statistics for Hungary also illustrate a high level of dropouts, particularly at "breaking points" in the school cycle when students transfer schools or new curriculum is introduced. While 62 percent of Hungarian students continued from primary to secondary school in 1997, only 9 percent of Roma children did so (Rado, 1997). These statistics vary among different Roma ethnic groups. For example, a survey by Puporka and Zadori found that the share of Roma with less than basic education was 23 percent for the Romungro Roma, whose native language is Hungarian, compared to 42 percent for the Bayash, whose native language is Romanian, and 48 percent for the Wallach Romas, who speak Romani as their first language (Puporka and Zadori, 1999).

The educational level of Roma also varies significantly by region and type of community. The 1993 survey quoted above found that the share of Roma who had not completed primary education was 16 percent in Budapest, 24 percent in towns and 27 percent in villages, reflecting the different types of constraints to access in each geographical area (Puporka and Zadori, 1999). These figures are even more significant given the fact that Roma are disproportionately represented in village schools. Fifty-six percent of Roma students study in village schools in Hungary, compared to 37 percent of all Hungarian students. (Kertesi–Kézdi, 1996:40). The same study also found that 70 percent of Roma students attend schools in which their proportion is higher than 10 percent, while nearly half of the non-Roma students attend a school where the proportion of Roma students is less than two percent.[1]

This school segregation can be explained by a number of factors. First, the proportion of Roma is often higher in industrial or rural counties where Roma migrated to work in state firms or agricultural co-operatives.[2] Many skilled non-Roma workers left with the collapse of these industries, leaving lower and unskilled Roma unemployed, or forced to find work in the informal sector. Second, societal prejudices can also contribute to high rates of segregation. Discussions with parents suggested that an increasing share of Roma students in a school or community could lead to an exodus of non-Roma to other schools. Finally, segregation has been found to be increasing in Budapest. The proportion of Roma is increasing in poorer central districts as more affluent non-Roma move to outside the city or to more prestigious central districts (Szőke, 1998).

IV. Constraints to Roma Access to Education

A range of interrelated and contrasting factors, including economic developments, sociological aspects, and characteristics of the education systems at large, help explain the declining access to education among Roma in Central and Eastern Europe during the transition period (Ringold, 2000). Many of these factors are difficult to assess and are common to the poor at large. Additional research is required to understand their relative impact on Roma. This section discusses general factors that constrain Roma access to school and hinder their academic performance.

A. Economic factors

At the outset of transition, real incomes throughout the region decreased with the output collapse and price and wage liberalization. While the transition has meant increased opportunities for some, it has led to poverty for others (World Bank, 2000). Education plays a key role in this process, as increasing evidence indicates a close link between poverty and education levels. In Central and Eastern Europe, households headed by university graduates are much less likely to end up in poverty than others, while those with primary and narrow vocational training are at higher risk (World Bank, 2000).

Poverty influences children's chances at succeeding and staying in school. Children from poor families are more likely not to attend or drop out of school than other children for a range of reasons including: (i) the financial and opportunity costs of schooling; (ii) imperfect information

---

1 Additional research conducted by Havas, Kemény and Liskó in 1999 (forthcoming) will provide a updated and more exact picture on the different form of segregation in Hungary.

2 These counties include Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Heves, Nógrád, Somogyi, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok.

about the benefits of education; (iii) limited choice and poor quality of educational services; (iv) poor housing conditions at home which impede learning; and (v) poor health status. Transition policies have also increased the cost of school attendance to families. The increasing prevalence of both official and unofficial fees (such as school materials, textbooks, excursion fees, as well as food and clothing) for education has threatened the ability of poor families to send their children to school. Moreover, as household incomes have fallen, the opportunity costs of sending their children to school have risen. Families may require children to work, either in the home, or outside in the informal sector. These developments affect all poor households, regardless of ethnicity. However, because Roma are disproportionately represented among the poor, they are more likely to be affected.

Poverty rates among Roma in Hungary are striking. The Hungarian Household Panel, which was conducted from 1992-97, found that Roma were over represented among the "long-term poor," defined as households that experienced poverty four or more times during the panel period.[3] While Roma comprised only 4 percent of the sample, the analysis found that one-third of the long-term poor were Roma. While 7.5 percent of the total population experienced long-term poverty between 1992 and 1997, 53 percent of the Roma population fell into this category.

B. Sociological and Cultural Factors

Roma social organization and culture may also impact participation in education. Some Roma parents may be protective and reluctant to send their children out of their family or community. This has been found to be particularly true of rural Roma families, whose children must either travel long distances or relocate to more urban areas to attend secondary school. But these tendencies do not support the common stereotype among teachers, education officials and non-Roma parents that Roma are lazy and uninterested in school. This study of alternative secondary schools in Hungary suggests the opposite; that given a supportive environment, Roma parents are eager to send their children to school and are often actively involved in their education (see also Rado, 1997).

Another factor influencing the low level of attendance and high drop out rates is the low age of marriage among some Roma groups. A survey conducted in Bulgaria in 1994, for example, found that 40 percent of Roma marry before the age of 16 and 80 percent before the age of 18, confirmed by recent additional fieldwork (Tomova, 1998; Tomova, 2000). Roma in Bulgaria and other countries frequently marry below the official age of marriage, thus limiting school attendance, as well as access to social benefits and housing, because of lack of documentation.

Language barriers are another significant factor in the low enrolment and graduation rates among Roma in Hungary. Miklós Kontra (1997) argues that many Roma in Hungary experience linguistic discrimination in school, which, in turn, leads to discrimination in the job market (Kontra, 1997; see also Kemény, 1996: 71-83). A 1994 survey found that low primary school graduation rates among 25 to 29-year-old Roma are highly correlated to their first language (Kemény 1995). Although the majority of the Roma in Hungary (around 71 percent) speak Hungarian as their primary language, the needs of the significant percentage of bilingual Roma in Hungary are not being met, (Réger and Szalai, 1998). Most schools fail to take into account the language needs of students from non-Hungarian or illiterate families Because most schools

3 The poverty line was set at one-half of mean adult equivalent income.

"presuppose, and even expect, the existence of knowledge coming from books, and builds upon it from the very beginning." Illiterate or non-Hungarian speaking students are put at a significant disadvantage (Réger, 1987: 31-89).

C. Education Policies and Practices

A number of educational policies and practices have limited Roma access to education and opportunities. As discussed above, one of the most damaging legacies of the socialist era for Roma education was the tendency to channel Roma children into "special schools" for the mentally and physically handicapped, or into remedial classes. Students enrolled in these schools are placed at a distinct disadvantage, due to the lower quality of education, their segregation from non-Roma students, and unequal access to quality jobs and education upon graduation.[4] Graduates of special schools are dually challenged on the labor market, as employers look unfavorably upon graduates of special schools, and the technical training they receive often fails to adequately prepare them for the current labor market.

Second, many Roma were allowed only to enter vocational or technical schools and discouraged from attending secondary grammar schools. These schools are generally academically weaker and offer limited training in narrowly defined fields. Legislation passed in 1995 in Hungary addressed some the inadequacies of vocational schools. The legislation mandated that vocational students receive at least two years of mainstream education (with the option of taking the national secondary examinations required to attend colleges or universities) and revised the number and types of vocational training offered to reflect the changing realities of the job market.

Discrimination against Roma by non-Roma teachers, school administrators and fellow students also contributes to low rates of attendance and attrition. Discrimination can both discourage children from attending school and affect the quality of education children receive in the classroom. Stereotypes about Roma and their attitudes toward education often lower teachers' expectations of the potential of Roma students. Discrimination can be both explicit, by separating Roma children in special classrooms, or channeling them into special or vocational schools, or implicit. More subtle forms of discrimination include parents discouraging their children from interacting or attending school with Roma children, and low expectations of teachers.

Finally, the lack of prepared teachers and curriculum to address the special needs of Roma may also contribute to their low levels of attendance and performance. Teacher training programs generally do not include training in areas such as multicultural and bilingual education, and special needs which would facilitate the social integration of Roma. One teacher interviewed for this study remarked, that "universities and colleges do not prepare us for teaching Roma children." There is also a lack of Roma teachers within the educational system. While this is not a precondition for quality teaching, the presence of teachers who understand the background and challenges facing Roma children, and who can serve as role models in an important factor in the success of Roma students. Teaching aids, textbooks, and curriculum guides are generally not available to teachers to address the special needs of Roma or to incorporate lessons about Roma language, history or culture.

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4 This practice is particularly rampant in the Czech Republic. In 1997, an estimated 64 percent of primary-school aged Roma were enrolled in special schools. See ERRC, 1999 for further information.

Chapter 2: Institutional Background

I. Characteristics of the Schools

Most of the institutions included in this survey were established in the mid-1990s, with the exception of Don Bosco that was established in 1988 (Table 2.1). The institutions are located in communities with a high proportion of Roma, including urban districts in Budapest, regional capitals such as Pécs, and smaller towns and villages. While all schools and programs are targeted to secondary school-aged Roma, some include younger primary school children (Don Bosco) and older university and vocational students (Don Bosco, "Roma Chance," and Kalyi Jag). The size of the institutions also varies, from 30 students in the Collegium Martineum to 442 students enrolled in the Don Bosco Primary and vocational school. Moreover, while some schools contain only Roma students, other schools have a proportion of non-Roma (including over 50 percent of the Roma Chance students). The characteristics and missions of the schools also vary, from an emphasis on preparation for university preparation curriculum and the development of Roma "intellectuals" at the Gandhi School, to remedial or vocational training for students lacking secondary school diplomas.

Table 2.1: Profile of Schools

	Year Founded	Location	Student Ages	Number Students (1999)	Percent Roma (1999)	Teachers (Full/Part) (1999)	Main Characteristics
Don Bosco Primary and Vocational School	1988	Kazinc-barcika (Industrial town of 37,000)	12 – 16	442 (of which: 62, primary; 180, secondary, and 200, vocational)	66%	36 / 13	- General 7th – 10th grade general ed. - Vocational training post 10th grade
Martineum Collegium	1996	Village of Mánfa, near Pécs	14 – 18	30	100%	3 / 3	- Student hostel for talented Roma secondary students - Offers Roma history, culture, and language study
Roma Chance Alternative Vocational School	1996	Szolnok (pop. 80,000)	14 – 22	102	45%	6 / 5	- Profession training and remedial education for disadvantaged Roma and non-Roma - General secondary school (after 1999)
Gandhi Secondary Grammar School and Hostel	1994	Pécs (pop. 169,000)	12 – 18	170	99%	29 / 3	- General secondary school, 8th – 12th grades - Romani language instruction - Higher education emphasis
Kalyi Jag Roma Minority Professional School	1994	Budapest (District VI)	14 – 25	61	100%	4 / 10	- Two-year vocational and professional training, including computers
Józsefváros School	1997	Budapest (District VII)	12 – 18	52	96%	0 / 12	- After-school and weekend vocational training and tutoring - Roma culture programs

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II. Educational Goals and Programs

All six institutions included in this study were established to address the unique demands and needs of Roma students which were not being met in the framework of the traditional educational system. The following section describes and then compares the programs and goals of the six educational institutions.

A. Goals and Programs

1. **Don Bosco Primary and Vocational School:** In 1998, the Don Bosco Primary and Vocational School was created as an institution with partial funding from the Catholic Church to protect children in need. Don Bosco is located in Kazincbarinka, an industrial town of 37,000 that was devastated by the collapse of industry in the 1980s. The school originally served young people between the ages of 13 to 25 who were placed under state guardianship. While the educational emphasis of the school was to provide vocational training for a variety of trades, it has since expanded its mission to include general primary and secondary education.

2. **Collegium Martineum Students' Hostel for Talented Secondary School Students:** The founders of the Collegium Martineum Students' Hostel for Talented Secondary School Students realized that "for (primarily Roma) youth coming from the bottom 10 percent of the income and prestige hierarchy of society...only everyday personal attention and spiritual, social and educational assistance can bring about real opportunities for continuing their studies." The founders believed that providing economically disadvantaged children with a comfortable and supportive living environment could improve their educational achievements. The hostel provides Roma culture and language programs (primarily the Beash language). The ultimate goal of the institution is to contribute to the successful completion of secondary school and to help students continue their education in colleges or universities.

3. **Roma Chance Alternative Vocational Foundation School.** Joining forces with the National Roma Federation, "Lungo Drom," the national Roma governmental body, the founders of the school took advantage of rights guaranteed by the national law on the rights of national and ethnic minorities to found the Roma Chance Alternative Vocational Foundation School, Secondary School and Students' Hostel. The school was targeted to homeless or migratory Roma who had dropped out of school but were still of school age.

4. **Gandhi Public Foundation Secondary Grammar School**: The Gandhi Public Foundation Secondary Grammar School and Students' Hostel has provided a model for Roma education, not only in Hungary but in Central and Eastern Europe. The School was the first secondary school created for minority students. The founders of the Gandhi school wanted to produce future Roma intellectuals committed to the cause of the Roma and the continuation of Roma language and culture. To achieve this aim, the School provides secondary school certification and, like the Collegium Martineum, helps its graduates to continue their studies in colleges and universities. The school also teaches Romanian (or Beash) and Romani languages and Roma history and culture.

5. **Kalyi Jag Roma Minority Professional School.** The Kalyi Jag Roma Minority Professional School, located in the sixth district of Budapest, was founded in 1994 to provide a two-year program for students who have completed primary school, but who are not enrolled in public secondary school institutions, or who are no longer qualified due to age restrictions.

According to its founders, the school aims to promote and preserve Roma identity and community. The school also aims to provide up-to-date education and training, including computer skills.

6. **The Józsefváros School**. The Józsefváros School, located in the eighth district of Budapest, offers extracurricular education to primary and secondary school students, both half-day and weekend programs. The school was founded in 1997, due in part to a needs assessment carried out by the Autonomous Roma Minority Section of the Józsefváros Municipality in 1996 that determined that while Roma primary school graduation rates had increased, this same improvement was not evident in secondary school graduation rates. Due to demands of local parents, the Józsefváros School does not remove children from their own school, but cooperates with government schools to promote the educational success of Roma students. Teachers assist students through tutoring and extracurricular activities.

B. Summary and Comparison of Goals and Programs

Various factors led to the establishment of these alternative schools for Roma. Some were grass-roots initiatives based on local demands with support from local Roma and non-Roma leaders. The needs of students of particular ages, expectations of parents, and the unique needs of the community at large shaped the goals of the schools.

The missions and programs of the schools have changed over time to account for changing needs and situations. For example, the original aim of the Don Bosco school was to create a place where young people could meet outside of school, engage in vocational programs, and have a place for games and extracurricular activities. The vocational school was established several years later. In 1995, due to changes in national education laws, the school expanded its mission again to include a two-year secondary school. The vocational school (providing training in plumbing, brick-masonry, house-painting, hairdressing, and shoemaking) was also transformed into a three-year skilled workers' training program. Moreover, while children were originally placed in the student hostels of other secondary schools, the school built its own student hostel in 1994. When Don Bosco was founded in 1988, 30 children were enrolled; by 1999 the school had more than 400 students.

A comparison of the mission and programs yielded three main sets of goals. The schools to which these goals apply are listed in the parentheses.

1. **Educational goals**:
   - Basic education: provide remedial courses, help students advance to next educational levels, teach learning skills and strategies (all schools);
   - Vocational training: provide professional skills that are competitive on the labour market and the transmit up-to-date knowledge (Don Bosco; Roma Chance; Kalyi Jag)
   - Secondary education: improve rates of graduation from secondary school and passage of state final examinations, (Gandhi, Collegium Martineum);
   - Provide instruction in Roma language and culture (Gandhi; Roma Chance, Józsefváros);
   - Create programs for gifted and talented students, including science immersion programs (Gandhi, Collegium Martineum);
   - Apply experimental learning techniques (Józsefváros School);
   - Promote the continuation of Roma education in postgraduate colleges and universities (Gandhi, Collegium Martineum);

2. **Social and cultural goals**:
   - Preserve Roma language, values and traditions (Roma Chance; Gandhi);
   - Preserve and develop Roma identity (Kalyi Jag);
   - Overcome socialization problems and strengthen self-confidence (Don Bosco);
   - Transmit cultural values through extracurricular activities (Józsefváros School);
   - Encourage community involvement (Collegium Martineum);

3. **Political and economic goals**:
   - Provide social assistance, decrease economic disadvantages of Roma, stress equal opportunities (Don Bosco, Collegium Martineum, Roma Chance);
   - Promote health education (Roma Chance).
   - Provide instruction on the principles and practices of democracy (Collegium Martineum).

III. Vocational Programs and Curriculum

The end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s marked the beginning of important economic changes in Hungary. The economic transformation brought about important changes both in the institutional system of vocational training and the types of trades included in vocational curriculum (see Liskó, 1997b). Following the regime change in 1989, state-owned factories that employed large numbers of young workers trained in agriculture and light and machine industry collapsed. By the mid-1990s, it became obvious that special professional or vocational secondary schools were not meeting the demands of the new market economy, and were excessively narrow in focus. In 1995, the Hungarian parliament passed an amendment to the national act on education to transform vocational training. As a result, now vocational training can only be offered after students complete the 9th or 10th grade, and only in those trades included in a national list. The changing nature of vocational programs in Hungary can be traced in the history of the Don Bosco Vocational School.

The Don Bosco Vocational Training Center and Primary School was established in 1988 in Kazincbarcika, a region densely populated by Roma. Unemployment in the region dramatically increased in the 1980s due to restructuring of failing state enterprises. In 1987, the founder of the school discovered that over 60 percent of the youth he encountered as a city social worker were Roma. To address the needs of these young Roma, he founded a place where they could meet and gain basic and vocational skills. The enrolment of Roma children in skilled workers' training centers was hindered by the fact that many of them had not finished primary school, and those who had often possessed poor learning skills and motivation. The second task, then, was to provide primary and secondary education for the students at Don Bosco. In 1993, the school was granted an exemption to enroll children over the age of sixteen in primary school classes (the primary school age limit in Hungary). The modifications to the vocational curriculum following the 1995 amendment to the national education act were met with approval from teachers and students at Don Bosco, as it has increased the choice of vocational programs to reflect better the demands of the new economy.

IV. School Infrastructure

The quality of school infrastructure, school maintenance and the modernity of the equipment are important factors for the successful operation of schools. This study found that the schools discussed here were generally poorly equipped. In many cases this was due to the newness of the institutions, the challenges a number of them faced in getting established, and budget constraints.

In some cases, schools have had difficulties maintaining or acquiring the necessary buildings, classrooms and equipment to run their educational programs. These developments have taken place in an overall context of declining capital investments in the education sector. Between 1991 and 1999 capital expenditures on general schools (nursery, primary and secondary) fell from 8 to 5 percent of total education expenditures. The following discusses some of the specific issues facing the individual schools in this study and a summary of some common needs.

Students from Collegium Martineum had to spend their first school year at the local church while a large country-house built in 1914 in the village was being reconstructed. An article published in the local newspaper reported, "When the organizers of the school bought the country-house for 1.5 million forints, the village followed the events with distrust." (Magyar Hírlap, 10. Jun. 1999). The purchase and renovation of the building was made possible from support received from foreign organizations and foundations, including Renovabis, the charity organization of the German Catholic Church, and a Dutch foundation. The Ministry of Welfare also contributed some funds for renovations and the Soros Foundation and some other smaller organizations helped to buy equipment for the student hostel. The Józsefváros School acquired property of their own in a block of flats in Budapest with the support of a Dutch foundation.

The life of Kalyi Jag, however, has been characterized by persistent uncertainty. The school used to rent a large flat from the municipality of Budapest's 6th district. Public health authorities threatened to close the school several times due to overcrowded classrooms and for failing to provide enough lavatories required by law. Although the Ministry of Culture and Public Education intervened on the school's behalf, the school still faces overcrowding. The computer classroom, for example, has been placed in the cellar of the founding organisation, the Kalyi Jag Roma Artistic Association.

The Roma Chance School acquired a new building in 1999 for classes and planned to convert the old school into a student hostel. The newly acquired building was previously a school, but was cleared of all equipment and furniture. The headmaster managed to collect second-hand furniture donated by local companies and students and teachers of the school worked all summer, and on weekends, to repair and re-paint second-hand furniture. They also managed to renovate the gymnasium and the canteen. In the future, the school would like to convert additional buildings to host new professional training courses such as tailoring, needlework, and printing and would like to set up a literary café in the courtyard.

The headmaster of the Gandhi Secondary School reports that completing construction on the school is a top priority to accommodate its growing student body. The Gandhi School still lacks an educational building equipped with classrooms. The construction of a gymnasium was finished in 1999 with financial support from the Soros Foundation. Although the Foundation does not generally grant money for investments, it provided 12.5 million forints for the building.

The Don Bosco school resides in former miners' apartments, located between a Roma neighborhood and a picturesque mine lake. The buildings from the mine have been gradually renovated as the school has acquired renovation funds. Renewing and modernizing the broken-down buildings is costly, so construction goes slowly and according to strict budgets. Part of the construction is done as professional training by the students, which serves the dual purpose of providing job training and saving the school several million forints. The main building of the school contains a chapel, some offices and a classroom. One building hosts tailor training programs, and another printing facilities with their own technical rooms. A detached house hosts

the computer laboratory, the official quarters, the rooms of commuting teachers, as well as bedrooms for guests.

When asked to list their top priorities in improving the conditions of their schools, headmasters and the teachers identified similar needs. In addition to needing traditional library books and resources, they would also like to purchase educational materials such as CDs and videos – about Roma and other minorities, in particular – as well as modern appliances such as colour TV sets and CD players. For schools that offer vocational training, the lack of appropriate training centers constitutes a serious problem. Part of the mission of the Józsefváros School is to "create a stimulating, quiet, and pleasant environment for the students who do not have it at home, which incites them to continue their studies." Therefore, Roma schools and hostels place a strong emphasis on providing furniture in good condition, technical instruments, curtains, carpets, household appliances, and linens to students who do not enjoy such comforts at home.

V. Educational Personnel

Teachers are central to the quality of education. Support from teaching staff serves as a key motivating factor for student attendance and performance. The following section describes the roles of teachers, administrators and staff in the schools discussed here.

A. Teachers

The number of the teachers in the institutions, as well as their qualifications, varies according to school and is generally related to the number of the students and the type of school. Some worked with a family-sized staff (for example, in the 1998-1999 school year, the Roma Chance Vocational Foundation School had six full-time teachers, the Collegium Martineum three teachers, and Kalyi Jag 4 teachers), while other schools had a large absolute number of teachers (Don Bosco, for example, has 36 full time teachers and Gandhi 39 teachers). Ratios of students to teachers are more illustrative. With the exceptions of Don Bosco and Roma Chance, there are more teachers per student in the study schools than the national average for Hungary. The Gandhi School, in particular has low student teacher numbers, 5.6 in 1999 (Table 2.2). Ratios are substantially lower than the OECD average of 15.1. The low student-teacher ratios may reflect the greater need for individual attention in the schools.

Table 2.2: Student-Teacher Ratios, 1999

School	*Students/Teacher*
Don Bosco	10.4
Martineum	6.7
Roma Chance	12.0
Gandhi	5.6
Kalyi Jag	6.8
Józsefváros	8.7
National Averages	
General Secondary	10.3
Vocational Secondary	13.3
OECD Average (upper secondary)	15.1

• Teacher numbers are based upon full-time equivalent, assuming that part-time teachers work half-time.

Most teachers possess specialized qualifications, or were in the process of obtaining appropriate qualifications at the time of the interviews. Most directors reported that professional proficiency is not sufficient to teach at Roma secondary schools. According to the program of the Józsefváros School, for example, the most important criteria for selecting teachers is their professional qualifications, but "it is also important to have mature adults who are familiar with Roma culture and the culture of the majority society in the environment of the children. We need open-minded, creative, tolerant, sympathetic people with much social sensitivity." These views were reflected in other schools' written materials and from interviews with school directors who were asked how and on what basis they select teachers and administrative staff. One director reported that his most difficult challenge is hiring suitable staff, remarking that "You cannot employ someone off of the street." Another asserted that: "a biased personality, a teacher with 'feudal' attitudes is unfit for this kind of work." It is difficult to assess how well a candidate relates to Roma, although one director reported that "people who graduate from universities generally are more tolerant." A director describes her hiring strategy:

> *In the beginning I hired some teachers with very good reputations. I expected them to serve as models of how this work should be done. The majority of them are still with us. The other strategy was to hire Roma teachers. All Roma teachers working in our school are young, the majority of them are still studying in higher education. Their presence in the Józsefváros School is important not only because they perform valuable work, but also because they present a model to follow for young people learning in our school.*

The answers teachers gave to questions regarding how they had come to work in these schools and their motivation reflect the kind of attributes directors seek. All of the teachers consider themselves open-minded and creative people who felt a bit out of place of "traditional" schools.

Although it was evident from our site visits and interviews with teachers, staff and administrators that the atmosphere in these schools was very good and morale high, the teachers still face a number of challenges in teaching Roma students. Some of these difficulties were attributable to "a lack of knowledge about the history and the customs of Roma, about survival strategies that influence their lives. We do not know their language. Nobody helps to fill this gap." The Soros Foundation helps to fill this gap by bringing together teachers in Roma secondary schools for training courses and cultural studies relating to teaching Roma. Other teachers complained about the long hours and low pay.

In all of the institutions there are also Roma teachers, vocational trainers and technical staff members. Although ethnic origin was not considered the highest priority in selecting staff (human values and the relationship to children are reported to be more important), the hiring of Roma staff members was considered crucial in schools with a high percentage of Roma students. Directors and teachers of the institutions reported that teacher aides, social workers, psychologists and technical staff members are useful, in many cases indispensable, to the school and deemed it absolutely necessary to create the financial conditions needed for their selection and employment. One teacher describes the important role that a Roma housekeeper plays in the Collegium Martineum:

> *Ann, the housekeeper, has been working with us for three years, since the very beginning. She is responsible for the kitchen ... But besides this, her task is also to listen to all complaints of the children and to act as their mother. In this respect it is important that*

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she is a Roma herself. They can ask her about all kinds of problem, even in their mother tongue, in Beash. One of the great advantages with Aunt Annie is that she would notice everything, even things that teachers would not, like drug abuse.

B. School Directors

Competent directors who have both strong professional credentials and excellent entrepreneurial and leadership skills lead most institutions. In most cases the director is also the founder of the school. A number of directors described their motivations and experiences in founding schools for Roma:

> *When I launched this school, I felt that I had already experienced everything to be prepared for the work. By chance I came upon the book by Don Bosco entitled The Apostle of the Boys. I tried to join my own ideas, the present reality with what I read in that book. The spirituality of the school has been formed in this way.*

> *The idea of establishing the school originated from me. But in order to transform idea into reality, I also needed partners. My colleagues and my friends not only verbally supported me, but they also took an active part in its creation. Of course, there had been opponents as well since the very beginning. It was a great experience. For me, this is my life.*

The successful administration of educational institutions increasingly requires good management skills. Besides managing the institution and directing the educational programs, directors have three additional major responsibilities. For one, they must secure financing to run the school, from the government, foundations, and non-governmental institutions. They must also attend conferences and meetings, pay visits to foundations and embassies, host Hungarian and foreign visitors to the school and generally serve as spokespeople for the school. And finally, they must cooperate with the board of trustees, most of which are made up of members who are well-known personalities or who are advocates of Roma.

Directors are also responsible for maintaining a positive morale in the school. One of the institution leaders explained: "I think that the atmosphere of the institution and public feeling of those who work there are basically determined by the style of the direction. Colleagues are calmed by the free flow of information. Another important factor is that they should feel the importance of what they are doing." Teachers confirmed this sentiment in interviews, as indicated by the following excerpts.

> *There is a team here. Ours is a small school, we are like a family. The cleaner and the director are equally important persons.*

> *We just moved into a new building and not so long ago it seemed that we would become bankrupt. Then we began thinking together and decided to expand. The director undertook the lion's share in fighting the battle.*

VI. Financing

The nature and operation of alternative secondary schools for Roma is significantly influenced by the fact that they operate as private schools. Private schools make up only six percent of schools in Hungary. The establishment of private schools was made possible in the 1990s, after a 1989 amendment to the Hungarian constitution which stipulated that the Republic of Hungary respects and supports the freedom of education. Subsequently, in 1990 Parliament

amended the act on education and made it possible for citizens to establish and operate private nurseries, primary and secondary schools, student hostels and primary level institutions of artistic education. Of all the countries in the region, only Hungary offers a subsidy to some nongovernmental schools equivalent to 100 percent of the cost of government schools. Private schools also enjoy considerable autonomy and operate as legally autonomous institutions separate from the municipal school system. Although the state monitors their educational standards and financing, private schools are given significant autonomy in designing their programs and curriculum.

The 1993 and 1996 Acts on Public Education also expanded the rights to establish public educational institutions. Public educational institutions can now be established and maintained by the state, municipalities, local minority self-governments, the national minority self-government, ecclesiastic legal personalities registered in the Republic of Hungary, businesses, and foundations. A number of private schools included in this study have taken advantage of this opportunity to take part as partners in the provision of state educational services, although they must be granted permission from local authorities.

Registered operators of nongovernmental schools are automatically given the same normative state transfers from the central budget as local governments. The central budget provides local governments and operators of nongovernmental schools with education transfers based upon on a series of norms including population size and characteristics of the student body (e.g. ethnicity, disability). In practice, local governments spend about twice as much on education as provided by the state through transfers. An average of 30 percent of the annual budget of local governments is devoted to education. This additional educational revenue comes from state grants for other purposes, local taxes, the share of general income taxes transferred to local governments, and other local revenues. Besides the normative support, an obligatory seven percent of all public education expenditure is spent on the development of public educational programs and technology, the development of teachers' in-service training, and other activities defined by law.

In 1993 an OECD survey of Hungary found that nine percent of total educational expenditures came from nonbudgetary sources. The vocational training contribution (wage tax) paid by employers, for instance, covers approximately 22 to 25 percent of the total expenses of school-based vocational training. This contribution may be paid to the Vocational Training Fund (administered by the Ministry of Education); or may be directly given to a vocational training institution chosen by the company; or the company itself may provide training out of its contribution either for the school population or its own employees (World Bank, 2000). Institutions are also entitled to accept donations from parents and private sponsors, and these donations are tax deductible. From 1997 on, taxpayers may direct one percent of their income tax to designated public interest organizations.

This option has yielded significant additional income for some schools. Parents also covered additional operational costs. By 1999, for instance, 80 percent of the total costs of textbooks were covered by the parents (up from 60 percent in 1994). Most schools carry out certain economic or other activities to gain extra income, including renting out classrooms for language classes or holding courses themselves. In some cases vocational schools earn significant extra income by selling in-service or retraining programs for the adult labor force. Private schools can also seek donations from private donors, including churches, domestic and foreign non-governmental organizations, and international aid organizations.

Table 2.3 describes the different types and amounts of funding sources received by the six schools included in this study.

Table 2.3: Funding Sources, 1998-99
(Hungarian Forints in '000s)

Institution	Total School Budget (draft)	Federal Funding (per student)			Percent of Budget[4]	Other Sources[5]	Internal Sources[6]
		General[1]	Supplement[2]	Total[3]			
Don Bosco	HUF 127,520 (USD 490,462)	HUF 135 (USD 518)	HUF 19 (USD 72) - Library	HUF 154 (USD 590)	53%	HUF 47,600 (USD 183,077) - Catholic Church; local municipality	HUF 14,920 (USD 57,385)
Martineum	HUF 61,000 (USD 234,615) includes capital investments for building construction.	HUF 136 (USD 529)	HUF 10 (USD 38) - Roma Minority	HUF 145 (USD 557)	7%	HUF 37.200 (USD 143,077) Local municipality; Roma self-government; Dutch NGO	0
Roma Chance	HUF 17,067 (USD 65,644)	HUF 108 (USD 415)	HUF 117 (USD 450) - Roma Minority; Vocational Education	n/a	51%	HUF 8,400 (USD 32,308) Local municipality; Roma self-government; Foundation for Hungarian Roma; PHARE; National Foundation for Jobs; other.	0
Gandhi	HUF 136,700 (USD 525,769)	HUF 89 (USD 344)	HUF 196 (USD 755) Roma Minority; Student hostel	n/a	37%	HUF 7,872 (USD 30,275) Soros Foundation; local municipality; Roma self-government.	HUF 5,612 (USD 21,584) Canteen; bank interest
Kalyi Jag	HUF 15,100 (USD 58,077)	n/a	n/a	n/a	65%	HUF 1,500 (USD 5,769) Local municipality; Roma self government; school founder.	n/a
Józsefvárosi	HUF 11,680 (USD 44,923)	n/a	n/a	n/a	0%	HUF 8,710 (USD 33,500) Local municipality; Roma self government; SOROS.	n/a

(1) General, untargeted national federal education funds, *per student*
(2) Additional national federal funds targeted for projects or programs listed, *per student*
(3) Total national federal education funds, *per student*
(4) Federal funding (from normative transfers) as % of total school budget
(5) Other resources, from local municipalities, foundations, and other organizations listed.
(6) Internal sources of income, such as rental of school facilities.

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A. Normative Support

Among the challenges faced by alternative secondary schools for Roma children, it is clear from interviews with administrators, teachers and students that the most important problems are connected with finances. The operations, and indeed the very existence, of these schools are constantly under threat of a lack of financial support.

All of the institutions included in this study are classified as private schools and receive normative support (e.g. through transfers), supplemented by donations and support received from other private funding organizations and foundations. Only one school among the six institutions surveyed – the Józsefváros School – does not receive governmental support, since it does not correspond to the criteria defined in the 1996 Act on Public Education. The school only provides education indirectly, in the form of remedial programs, computer classes and library services. Although the other five schools do receive normative support, it only covers some of the costs of operating the schools.

As shown in Table 2.3, public support from normative transfers covered from 7 percent of the school budget at the Collegium Martineum to 65 percent of Kalyi Jag. Directors explained in interviews that the support received from the federal budget is only sufficient to cover salaries, but cannot cover the maintenance expenditures. Renovation activities and acquisitions of new facilities can only be done with the additional aid of private institutions. The amount of federal funding also makes it practically impossible for these schools to employ experts such as psychologists and social workers who are important for the operation of the schools.

B. Non-governmental funding sources

Due to limited governmental funds, schools seize every opportunity to find matching funds to supplement normative funds. Many schools look to their original or primary benefactors for additional support. The boards of trustees of the Józsefváros School and Collegium Martineum, for example, are instrumental in attracting more funding, since they include well-known researchers and experts who took part in the establishment of the institution and can effectively lobby on the schools' behalf. The Catholic Church is not only a primary benefactor of the Don Bosco School, but also supports the school by paying for printing and by buying equipment. The contribution of the church has increased over the years, constituting from 13 to 21 percent of the annula budget. The Church also provides 10 to 23 percent of the budget of the Kalyi Jag Professional School.

Schools also rely heavily on funding from private granting organizations and foundations. For example, because the Józsefváros School is not entitled to governmental support, it relies solely on donations and grants. The Soros Foundation covered 50 to 60 percent of the school's costs in the first three years, including teachers' salaries. The school also receives a million forints from the Public Foundation for the Roma in Hungary. Directors explained in interviews not only how crucial private support is to the functioning of the school, but how fundraising can often become a top priority, overshadowing the educational missions of the school. A director explained:

> *Federal support covers about 50 percent of our budget. We owe a lot to our benefactors. But we could not survive without private funding opportunities. The Soros Foundation and the Phare Programme have granted us substantial support. Fund-raising often distracts us from educational work. To feel safe, we would need public support at a level two and a-half times higher than at present.*

The directors note that relying on grants and donations creates a lot of uncertainty surrounding the sustainability of the school's operations. One director explains that the involvement of a foreign partner is the only way to ensure the school's survival.

> *No private educational institution can survive in Hungary nowadays without the involvement of a foreign partner. We received some minimum support from the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities and also some grant funds from the Public Foundation for the Roma in Hungary. Unfortunately, all funding is variable.*

Several directors also complained that money available from grants must only be used for designated purposes, like purchasing particular equipment or funding special scholarships. But according to the directors, the granting agency is often not interested in what the school really needs. One director suggested that these restrictions have forced him to manipulate the funding proposals: "The present system of financing sometimes makes us cheat. We submit project proposals describing programs that are already running in order to be able to continue what had been launched and to buy what is indispensable."

When drafting their budgets, the institutions also take into consideration that their students require special financial aid in order to attend school. In many cases the schools provide free meals and hostel accommodations, school books and supplies, clothing and shoes. They also pay for student travel expenses, university preparatory courses, summer language camps, and so forth. The schools also encourage students to seek individual scholarships from private granting agencies, the most important of which is the Soros Foundation, which also provides grants for teachers. Scholarships are also granted by the Public Foundation for National and Ethnic Minorities. These scholarships were recently determined by the level of academic achievement, however, and thereby disqualified a large number of students.

Some schools try to increase their income by offering different services – such as the renting out rooms of the student hostel during the summer holiday, accepting commissions for the printing office, and so forth. Recruiting students to maintain the school also saves money. For example, Don Bosco students learning house-painting participated in the renovation of the school, a contribution which saved the school over eight million forints.

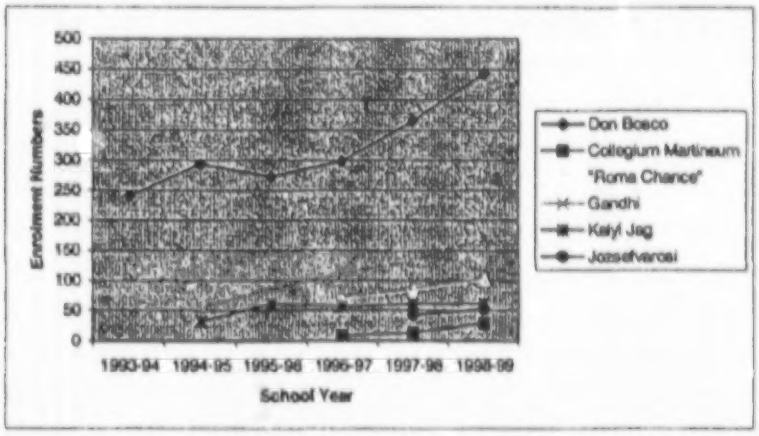
Chapter 3: Student Profiles

This chapter presents the demographics and characteristics of the students of the institutions surveyed according to their age, gender, origin, and family background.

I. Enrollment Trends

As indicated in Table 2.1 in the preceding chapter, the seven schools in this study are of varying sizes. Don Bosco has the highest enrolment (442 students, including 62 in primary school, 200 in vocational training, and 180 in the secondary school), followed by the Gandhi School (170 students), Roma Chance (102 students), Józsefváros School (52 students), Kalyi Jag (51 students), and Collegium Martineum (30 students). Figure 2.1 illustrates the change in enrolment numbers over time, from the 1993-94 to 1998-99 school years.

Figure 3.1: Enrollment Numbers, 1993-1999



Note: Data for Don Bosco includes primary and secondary students.

Figure 3.1 shows that enrollments between the 1993-94 and 1998-99 school years has increased significantly in all schools. Don Bosco has witnessed the most dramatic increase, from 241 students in 1993-94 to 442 students in 1998-99. The Gandhi and Roma Chance schools have also experienced steady growth.

Despite the steady increase in the number of students enrolled in these alternative secondary schools, the total number of Roma children enrolled in these schools represents only a fraction of the total number of Roma students in Hungary. This raises two questions: (i) *What kind* of students are attracted to these schools; and (ii) *Why* are they attracted to these schools? In order to answer the second question, we rely on the interview responses of students. Most students reported that relatives, teachers, friends and other acquaintances had encouraged them to attend alternative secondary schools. Following are some excerpts from students.

> *I heard about this school from my relatives and acquaintances. They told me why they thought it was a good school. There are no atrocities here: I am not called a Roma like in the other secondary school of vocational training I used to attend. I could tolerate life*

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there only for one month... I did not think I would ever attend school again (20 year old student from the Roma Chance School).

I study here because I want to achieve more than most Roma do. I also want to prove to my parents that a Roma can also achieve something. They think that a Roma is not worth anything (19-year-old graduate of the workers' training center).

One of my primary school teachers recommended this school to me. I was glad when he told me that I could attend this school. I thought that after a two-year break this was not possible any more. (19-year-old girl graduate of the skilled workers' training center)

II. Demographic Developments

Information on the age, gender, and ethnic origins of the students was gathered through school statistics and interviews. The following section describes the student demographics within each school and provides comparisons across schools.

A. Student Ages

The average age of students at the schools is between 13 and 14 years old. The most significant difference between the ages of alternative secondary school students and mainstream schools is the upper age limits. The maximum age of Kalyi Jag students is 25, for example, and 26 at Don Bosco. Several programs consciously target students who are above the average age of students in a given educational level. As mentioned above, some schools have sought and been granted permission to extend the qualifying age for primary school students beyond the national limit of 16 years of age. Subsequently, the average age of students in all grades is generally higher than in mainstream Hungarian schools.[5]

B. Gender

In Hungary, boys are more likely to participate in vocational and education than girls. In her assessment of training centers' and professional schools, Tót found that boys traditionally constitute the majority of the students (Tót, 1998). Table 3.2 presents the proportion of boys enrolled in the schools included in our study in both the 1997-98 and 1998-99 school years.

Table 3.1: Percentage of Boys, 1997 – 1999

Institution	Percentage of Boys	
	School-year 1997/1998	*School-year 1998/1999*
Don Bosco Vocational Training Center and Primary School	primary school: 83% training center: 62% secondary school of vocational training: 39%	primary school: 93% training center: 61% secondary school of vocational training: 36%
Collegium Martineum	57%	53%
Roma Chance Alternative Vocational Foundation School, Secondary School and Students' Hostel	50%	60%
Gandhi Public Foundation Secondary Grammar School and Students' Hostel	50%	61%
Kalyi Jag Roma Minority and Informatics Professional School	51.7%	51%
Józsefváros School	45%	50%

5 Data on the age distribution of students at the national level were not available.

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The statistics shown in Table 3.2 support Tót's claim that boys are in a majority in vocational training schools. The two vocational schools included in our study, Don Bosco and Roma Chance, have a higher percentage of boys than other schools, 61 percent and 60 percent respectively in 1998-99. The higher proportion of boys enrolled in training programs at Don Bosco could be attributed to the fact that most of the trades offered – welder, mason, shoemaker, house painter, flat-surface printer – are traditionally male occupations. In most of the other non-vocational schools, the gender proportion is balanced. The Gandhi Secondary Grammar School is an exception, however. The proportion of boys has grown, their proportion increasing from 28 percent in the 1994-1995 school year to 61 percent in 1998-1999. More information is required to explain this phenomenon.

The director of the Don Bosco School attributes the high level of boys in the primary school (83 percent in 1998 and 93 in 1999) to two factors. First, the students largely come from the streets, and these 'street children' are most frequently boys. Second, because of the emphasis on vocational training in the secondary school, mostly boys are attracted to the school.

C. Ethnicity

Most directors and teachers interviewed claimed that the educational needs of students were more important criteria than ethnicity in recruiting students to alternative schools. However, the educational missions of Kalyi Jag and Gandhi explicitly include the support of Roma youth. The education of Roma is also stressed in the programs of the Józsefváros School, Roma Chance and the Collegium Martineum, although it is not their exclusive aim. Although Don Bosco places no specific emphasis on attracting Roma, Roma make up a majority of the students at the school nevertheless, largely because of the geographic location of the school near a Roma neighborhood. Table 3.3 illustrates the percentage of Roma in each school included in this study.

Table 3.2: Percentage of Roma Enrolled, 1996 - 1999

Institution	1996/1997	1997/1998	1998/1999
Don Bosco Vocational Training Center and Primary School	65%	65%	66%
Collegium Martineum	100%	100%	100%
Roma Chance Alternative Endowment Professional School, Secondary School and Students' Hostel	50%	50%	45%
Gandhi Public Foundation Secondary Grammar School and Students' Hostel	99%	99%	99%
Kalyi Jag Roma Minority and Informatics Professional School	98%	100%	100%
Józsefváros School	-	96%	94%

Students interviewed reported that the high percentage of Roma was an important factor in attracting them to these particular alternative schools. One 19-year old Roma boy explained that reports of the Roma-orientation of Roma Chance was what inspired him to enroll in the school:

When I finished the primary school, I was admitted to a secondary school of vocational training. There were only few Roma there. I was told that we smelled and we were thieves. So I abandoned my studies and supported myself through occasional jobs for two years. Then one of my cousins, who was attending this school, told me to come here because people here are different. I do not regret it.

Roma students reported that they feel secure in these schools, not only because of the high percentage of fellow Roma but also because of the opportunity to study their history, the origin of their customs, the values of their culture and the chance to speak their first language. Several students cited the importance of language training and Roma cultural studies.

It would be good to have a language that we are the only ones to speak. I know some non-Roma who speak our language. I feel ashamed of not speaking it. Now I shall start to study it (18-year-old Roma girl).

Only my parents speak Beash at home. I can understand what they tell but I cannot speak the language. Now I am studying it in the students' hostel.

My grandmothers spoke Romany and my parents can understand it. I do not speak the language but I would like very much to learn it (17-year-old Vlach Roma boy).

I would like to know more about the origin of my people and our values. I think we too have some values. It is good to learn about this in our school, and sometimes famous Roma people also pay us a visit (18-year-old Roma boy).

Interviews with non-Roma students showed that attending school with a high percentage of Roma was an important and decisive factor in changing their way of thinking and their relationship to Roma. A boy who suffered serious injuries from a train accident reported that he felt accepted by and could count on this fellow Roma students: "Meeting Roma has produced a major change in my life. I realized that I could count on them." His mother concurred, explaining, "After the accident, he was easily accepted here, as if he had always belonged to them. ...His classmates frequently drop in on my son. Poverty and indifference constitute the main problem in these families. But I can understand them, it is not easy to feed and clothe so many children from only one salary, and there are no job opportunities."

III. Family Backgrounds

The director of the Józsefváros School, Judit Szőke, contends that students' relationships with their extended families play an important part in the educational success (Szőke, 1998). According to directors and teachers interviewed, most of the educational difficulties these children face are connected with poverty and other family problems. A systematic assessment of the family background of the children is beyond the scope of this study. In order to present a snapshot of the characteristic of students' families, we rely on a comprehensive study of the family background of students at the Józsefváros School by Szőke and interviews with students, their parents, and school administrators.[6]

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6 Because of the unique nature of the Józsefváros School, it important to note that this information cannot be generalized.

A. Family Size

Most students who attend alternative secondary schools come from rural areas, including many who attend the two Budapest schools included in our study, and students from rural areas generally tend to have larger families. Of the 45 students at the Józsefváros School 5 percent of families had one child, 37 percent of families had two children, 53 percent had three children, and four percent had four children or more (Szőke, 1998). These statistics are slighter higher than average Hungarian families.

B. Parents' Backgrounds

The socio-economic profile of the parents and families of students enrolled in alternative secondary programs is based on data and qualitative descriptions of the level of education of the parents, their employment status, and housing conditions. Table 3.3 describes the educational level of the parents of the 45 students at the Józsefváros School (Szőke, 1998):

Table 3.3: Parents' Education Level

Mother's Education Level		Father's Education Level	
Less than 8 grades	10%	Less than 8 grades	7%
8 grades	71%	8 grades	50%
Skilled workers' training center graduate	10%	Skilled workers' training center graduate	25%
University or college diploma	9%	University or college diploma	6%

Source: Szőke (1998)

These statistics are supported by interviews with students, although many students reported their parents had no education and were illiterate. One student explains that her parents are supportive of her getting an education, even though they did not attend school.

> *My parents did not attend school. They always dealt with trading, and they continue to do so. They are very proud of me and keep telling that at least I should study if they were not able to do so.*

The following excerpts from interviews with students describe their parents' level of education as well as their occupational status.

> *My mother finished seven grades and my stepfather finished only five. My stepfather used to work for 12 years for the sugar-factory and 5 years for the railroad, but now he is unemployed. He supports the family mainly from music making (24-year-old Beash student preparing for his final secondary examination).*

> *My father finished eight grades of primary school. He is a locksmith by trade, and he works as a repairman at the pig-farm. My mother also finished the primary school. She is a dressmaker, now she works as a door-keeper (16-year-old boy who wants to become a doctor).*

> *My father is 44. He used to work for the agricultural co-operative as a mechanic. He is disabled and unemployed. My mother is 41, she finished 3 grades of the primary school and now stays home with the children (19-year-old girl).*

In many cases children are expected to work to support their families. Many students reported that they have regular or part-time jobs, in addition to their studies, due to the financial hardships faced by their families. Although this is the case for all poor families, Roma are more affected because they are over-represented among the poor. Directors cited the need to work as one of the main reasons that children dropout. Even if the child does not work, some families consider sending their children to school as too great of a financial burden. For these reasons the school must raise funds to provide students with travel expenses, schoolbooks, accommodation and meals in the students' hostel, the costs of excursions, and so forth to keep students in school. Several students who receive scholarships to attend school related that they were also supporting their families from the modest amount of their scholarship.

IV. Parental Involvement in Schools

Parental involvement is crucial to the educational success of students. A number of factors, including poverty and low levels of education, present significant challenges to parental involvement in their children's education. Directors and teachers often complained about the indifference of families to education, school achievement, the selection of the school and career guidance. A number of teachers cited low levels of education among parents as a main obstacle to parental involvement.

> *Of course, there are some exceptions, but in general it is difficult to establish any kind of co-operation with the parents. I cannot inform the parents about anything in writing, many of them do not even know to read.*
>
> *The under-education of the parents constitutes one of the biggest problems in my work. Many of them are illiterate. Our students do not have the opportunity to develop and widen at home the knowledge they have acquired at school. Moreover, their situation is even harder because undereducated parents often do not think that it is important to study.*

Asked about their parents' involvement in their studies, students often explained why their parents were reluctant and opposed to schooling. One student whose mother was reluctant to send her daughters to school remarked: "Do not think that my mother is wicked and she does not love us. She only finished three grades. She does not have positive experiences of school, and she does not know that it is good for us."

The reluctance of parents to send their children can be explained by their lack of education or their negative experiences with school. They may also fear losing their educated children because of the gap education would place between them. Some parents expressed other concerns in interviews:

> *At first, I did not like the idea of my daughter attending school because we feared for her and thought she would meet boys and she might get pregnant. We knew, though, that she was not like this.*
>
> *I was afraid that the certificate my child will get in this school will not have the same value as that of another school.*

Numerous parents, however, expressed support for their children's education.

> *It was natural for us that he should go on studying. We asked him to sit for the final examination in the secondary school because without this exam he would not be able to*

find a job anywhere. It would be good if he could speak a foreign language and if he would pass an exam in information (a widowed mother)

Finally I let him go to school to study. It is not bad. It would be good for him to succeed in life.

A number of schools have created programs to increase the involvement of parents. Schools in which students come from numerous different villages and communities often find it difficult or impractical to visit each parent. Therefore, these schools have organized day-long programs for parents. The Collegium Martineum, for example, hosts one-day programs for parents to come to the hostel to prepare lunch together in the kitchen and discuss problems and concerns. The "Roma Chance" school runs a similar program. The Józsefváros School is always open to parents, according to Szőke, and parents often come have conversations with teachers and other parents. At the Gandhi school, a team of staff was charged with visiting families and maintaining continuous contacts with the parents. Parents were acquainted with the members of this team, knew the name of the teachers, and affectionately talked of a young Roma director who had recently died. The school aims to improve communication between teachers and parents. A subject for future research is whether these kind of informal programs work more effectively than formal parent organizations.

Chapter 4: School Performance

This chapter provides preliminary assessments of student performance within each school included in this study as well as a comparative analysis of all six schools. Student performance is measured by their achievements in school (including grades and state examination passage percentages), graduation and dropout rates, job and university placement statistics, and a general sense of satisfaction among students and teachers. The data was gathered from published school statistics, answers provided in questionnaires by school directors (see Annex C) and interviews with students and faculty. Student achievement statistics were compared with Hungarian national averages when possible.

Measuring student performance presents a number of unique methodological and theoretical challenges. For one, since most of these schools have been in existence for less than five years, they have very limited statistics on graduation and job and placement rates. The fact that the institutions vary significantly in their function (including secondary grammar schools, vocational schools, and student hostels), size and age only adds to the difficulty of comparing student achievement across schools. Moreover, each school collects different sets of statistics and to varying degrees. Second, because these schools are, by definition, "alternative," they may in many cases measure student achievement somewhat differently than mainstream schools. Grades, for example, may not be as important as rates of retention. Finally, it is always difficult to measure the success of a school by student statistics. The real measure may be the less tangible ones: to what extent, for example, have these schools changed the way approaches to teaching Roma students? Have these schools advanced the socio-economic and social status of the Roma community in Hungary? We can only offer preliminary and tentative answers to these questions, since the ultimate effect of these schools can only be measured with time.

I. In-school performance

Two means of measuring student achievement are (i) the number and percentage of students who failed courses; and (ii) the number and percentage of students forced to repeat a year, referred to here as repetition rates. Table 4.2 presents the available statistics from each school.

Table 4.2: Rates of Courses Failed and Repetition Rates, 1998-99

Institution	Total Number of Students	Failure Rates		Repetition Rates	
		#	%	#	%
Don Bosco Vocational Training Center and Primary School	442	35	8%	n/a	n/a
Collegium Martineum	30	2	7%	0	0%
Roma Chance Alternative Endowment Professional School, Secondary School and Students' Hostel	102	18	18%	6	6%
Gandhi Public Foundation Secondary Grammar School and Students' Hostel	170	46	27%	24	14%
Kalyi Jag Roma Minority and Informatics Professional School	61	11	18%	3	5%
Józsefvárosi School	52	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

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As illustrated in Table 4.2, the rate of failing grades is high in many schools, the Gandhi School (27 percent), Roma Chance and Kalyi Jag in particular. The number and percentage of students forced to repeat a grade is much lower across schools. In the case of Gandhi and Roma Chance this may be due to the larger number of overage students who have more difficulty taking exams. Further analysis is needed to investigate this hypothesis. The Gandhi School also has the highest percentage of students forced to repeat a grade – 14 percent – which is no doubt correlated to the low average grades.

One of the primary goals of all schools included in this study was to reduce the dropout rate among Roma youth and encourage them to continue their studies beyond primary school and, in many cases, beyond graduation from secondary school. Dropout rates provide a useful means of assessing to what extent schools have achieved this goal. Table 4.3 presents the number and percentage of students who dropped out of school within the 1998-99 school year. Drop out rates in all schools are significantly higher than the national average of 0.6 percent in the school year 1998/99.

Table 4.3: Drop Out Rates, 1998-99

Institution	Total Students	Dropped-Out		Types of Reasons Given
		#	%	
Don Bosco Vocational Training Center and Primary School	442	16	4%	Transferred to another school Chronic absences Family problems Got married
Collegium Martineum	30	3	10%	Family moved
Roma Chance Alternative Endowment Professional School, Secondary School and Students' Hostel	102	25	25%	Family and social problems
Gandhi Public Foundation Secondary Grammar School and Students' Hostel	170	81	48%	Chronic absences Poor student achievement
Kalyi Jag Roma Minority and Informatics Professional School	61	5	8%	Got married Family problems Transferred to another school
Józsefvárosi School	52	n/a	n/a	n/a

II. Employment and Higher Education Placement Rates

Measuring placement rates in jobs and higher education is difficult due to the fact that most schools do keep track of how many students find employment or attend colleges and universities after graduating. Schools that have been in existence for less than five years have few graduating classes. Two schools do have limited statistics from which to draw some very preliminary conclusions about students' successes after school. Among Don Bosco graduates, 12 students passed the final secondary examination in 1997-98 and 24 students in 1998-99. In addition, 44 students were granted professional qualification certificates in 1996-97, 31 students in 1997-98 and 50 students in 1998-99, reflecting the increase in enrollments at Don Bosco. Among student residents of Collegium Martineum, 3 students among 8 applicants were admitted to a higher education institution in 1998-99, representing a 38 percent success rate. Forty-four students received professional qualification certificates from the Roma Chance vocational school. In the

1997-98 academic year, 17 out of 42 students were admitted to an institution of higher learning (a 40 percent acceptance rate).

One of the main indicators for assessing the success of these schools is to examine the proportion of students who pass final secondary school examinations and who are admitted to universities and colleges. The only secondary grammar school among the six institutions surveyed, the Gandhi School, has been in existence for six academic years and therefore the first class graduated in 2000. Of the 18 students who graduated 7 are continuing on to universities and 11 are enrolled in vocational programs and will try again for university admission this year. The status of the Józsefváros School and Collegium Martineum is increased by the fact that a large number of their students have passed the final secondary exam and continue on to college or university. For example, eight students out of the 30 housed in the Collegium Martineum finished their studies in the 1998-1999 school year and of those eight, five went on to study at universities, colleges and high-level training courses – a 63 percent success rate. Two of the 15 secondary students enrolled in the Józsefváros graduated from secondary school in 1997-1998 school year, and one of them was admitted to the College of Enterprise.

The proportion and the quality of candidates, as well as the proportion of those finding a job can be good indicators in the case of schools of vocational training. Collecting and assessing such statistics can prove challenging. Schools rarely collect statistics on the employment status of their graduates. Although the proportion and the quality of the children wanting to enroll in a school can also serve as a measure of a school's success, according to Liskó, 1997b, she concedes that these statistics can also be misleading. Vocational schools generally attract students who were not admitted to secondary grammar schools or who dropped out of these programs. Schools like Don Bosco, Roma Chance, Kalyi Jag Schools were founded to serve students with low levels of educational achievement, or who return to school two or three years after completing primary school. The prestige or popularity of these schools can also be measured by the demand. Vocational schools like Don Bosco and Roma Chance are in high demand due to their innovative programs, such as computer training.

III. School Social Environments

One of the less tangible, yet most important, measure of a school's success is the degree to which it provides an open, safe and supportive environment for students, and Roma in particular. This is goal of several schools included in this study. To assess the degree to which schools have succeeded in providing such an atmosphere we rely on excerpts from interviews with students.

Most students reported they liked their school because their "otherness" was accepted, they felt that they were cherished, and that the atmosphere was comfortable and warm. These kind of positive sentiments might help to explain the rise in enrolment rates, as the reputation of the schools might be quickly spreading among the Roma community. Following are some excerpts from students.

> *At other places, the relationship to Roma children is different. They are despised even if their clothing is clean. I think here Roma are in vogue. Teachers do not make any distinctions.*

Students also spoke with fondness for their teachers and administrators, such as the following student.

I have my favorite teacher. I trust him and can tell him about everything. He would advise me if he can. And he does so not only with me. What is good in this school is that no distinction is made between Roma and non-Roma. The atmosphere is good. There is no quarrelling. Teachers and students trust each other.

Roma students reported that they feel secure in these schools, due not only to the high percentage of fellow Roma but also because the opportunity to study their history, the origin of their customs, the values of their culture and speak their first language. Several students cited the importance of language training and Roma cultural studies.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The schools surveyed in this report provide useful lessons for improving the educational attainment of Roma in Hungary, as well as in other countries in the region. Characteristics of the schools and their approaches can be incorporated into mainstream public schools and/or schools which focus on education for Roma students and other disadvantaged groups. Many of the ingredients of success identified in the study, including involving parents, supporting students outside of the classroom and incorporating multicultural approaches to education have the potential to improve the quality and inclusiveness of education systems as a whole, to the benefit of the entire population.

Support for Roma students. In all of the schools surveyed in the study, the schools' founders, administrators, and teachers recognized that Roma students face significant economic and social barriers to success in school, and as a result, require substantial support at school, home and in the community to overcome these obstacles. Staff in all of the schools expressed confidence in the academic capacity of Roma students, and a shared sentiment that, given a supportive environment, children and young people of all backgrounds can succeed and will develop an increasing responsibility for their own learning.

All of the schools provide support to students and families to help them overcome the financial costs of education, including scholarships, meals, accommodation, books, supplies and expenses for extracurricular activities. The schools also assist students by providing a supportive and flexible community environment, which in some cases extends to become a surrogate family. In many cases schools are open outside of classroom hours and during summer holidays. In the case of the Gandhi school, support for students extended beyond secondary school. During the last academic year a number of Gandhi graduates who were continuing on to university faced significant problems when their state-sponsored scholarships were delayed, and were unable to travel to their new school or find accommodation. The Gandhi School stepped in to provide them with temporary support until the scholarships arrived.

Parental Involvement. Parents in the schools participate in many different aspects of the educational process. In all of the schools, teachers maintain regular and positive contact with families, including frequent discussions of their children's progress. The schools recognize that parents play an important role in educating their children, and that the school has a responsibility to incorporate them into the educational process, to acknowledge their contributions, take advantage of their skills, knowledge and work with them so that they can support their children's education more effectively.

Extracurricular Activities. Support for students extends beyond academics in the classroom. Some of the schools provide extracurricular activities themselves, while others coordinate with other organizations to offer a wide range of educational opportunities during and after school, and during school holidays. Inherent in these programs is the recognition that many adults other than teachers can make important contributions to the education of students. Student involvement in school affairs, through student government, also provides important opportunities for students to increase their awareness and responsibility for their own education and to learn about their fellow students.

Multicultural Education. Many of the schools have incorporated aspects of Roma culture into their curricula to improve academic achievement, and to strengthen the ethnic and

community identity of their students. Roma history, language and customs are integrated into classroom and extracurricular programs. The schools have also sought to hire Roma teachers and staff to work in the schools and to provide adequate training for their teachers. Training in Roma culture and multicultural education has been important to prepare teachers to operate in a unique environment.

Pre-Secondary Education. Although this study focused on secondary schools, it also highlighted the importance of quality education in the lower grades to future school success. Poverty is not the only cause of low Roma enrollment and attendance in secondary schools, and other causes can be traced back to pre-primary education. In this context, schools and specialized programs at the pre-school and primary school level which prepare students for the classroom environment and address language barriers are extremely important. Roma children who do not speak Hungarian at home face particular challenges in starting school. For this reason, there should be teachers in nursery schools and the first grades of elementary school who are able to speak to and teach the Roma students in their native language(s).

In addition to the above, other factors contribute to the success of the schools. The ***personality and energy of the school personnel*** was identified in interviews as extremely important. All of the schools had a dynamic staff member, in most cases the director, who plays a critical role in leading the school and championing the schools interests among the community.

Access to adequate financing is also essential. In addition to resources to support standard operating costs, schools for Roma and other disadvantaged students have additional resource needs which may make them more expensive than other schools. For example, education personnel with specialized expertise, teaching materials, or library resources. Roma students also require greater access to scholarships and subsidized school materials (e.g. uniforms, textbooks) than other students to overcome economic barriers to education.

Hungary's unique system of financing for private schools made the establishment of the schools in this study possible in the first place. However, because the schools rely on both public and private resources, their long term fiscal sustainability is an issue. All of the institutions in the study function as private schools maintained by foundations or the church. As a result, the schools are dependent upon the availability of external resources, and are vulnerable to changes in the legal environment for donors and non-profit organizations. The institutions (such as the Jozsefvarosi School) which have not been entitled to state resources are particularly vulnerable.

The initiatives aimed at the education of Roma children described in this report will have a limited impact if they continue as isolated endeavors which serve the needs of only a small group of students. The features and principles discussed above can be incorporated into the practices of public schools throughout educational systems. However, it will be important to continue to examine the body of experience embodied in these schools, both to improve the functioning of the schools themselves, and to draw lessons that can be incorporated into other public and private secondary schools. More systematic monitoring and evaluation will be important. In particular, as the schools age and more classes graduate, tracking of student outcomes in future education and the labor market will become possible. Discussions with school personnel indicated that they are willing and interested in further analysis and review to ensure the quality of their work.

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